

This is the first Makita portable bandsaw to wash up on our shores, and not a bad one for a debut either. Aimed at the professional as well as the amateur user, this medium-sized machine has a lot to offer, including one or two features that haven't been seen on a saw of this class to date

Makita LB1200F bandsaw



£499

Although it doesn't appear to be anything out of the ordinary, the LB1200F is constructed to the usual high standard we've come to expect from the leading Japanese power tool manufacturer. It comes in two parts – the saw itself and a heavy-duty Meccano-style wheeled stand. Both are of sufficiently robust construction to ensure a healthy workout for the new bandsaw owner during set-up and positioning!

Extra features

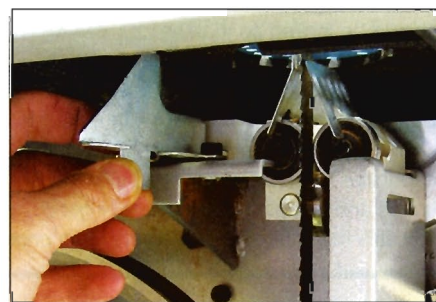
Partly due to its being a fairly late entry into this field, and partly because of their ongoing drive for improvement, Makita have been able to address some of the irksome issues that most bandsaw users have with this type of entry-to-intermediate-level machine. One of the most welcome features is the amount of adjustment available on just about everything; like all machines, a bandsaw really benefits from a careful set-up.

I can only applaud the Makita employee who suggested the inclusion of the LED work light. After all, why restrict this feature only to hand-held power tools? This one is a cluster design, and really makes a difference for all of those intricate cuts and close-up work.

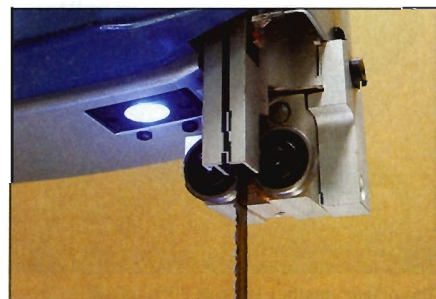
The cast-iron table is very solid, and benefits from a sensible and safe twist-action adjustment. There's no danger of a sudden unexpected drop with this one; merely the opportunity to set up a cut which is perfectly square to the blade.

Simple ideas

Another interesting feature of the saw table is the slide-away fence rail at the front edge. Together with a quick-release on the blade



The guide bearings are extremely easy to adjust



The LED light means no more working in the gloom



TESTED BY MARK CASS

tensioner, this makes for an easy blade change – just another simple idea which saves a bit more time and effort in the busy workshop.

If, like me, you don't have dedicated bandsaw extraction, there's a chance to get rid of some sawdust while you've got the back open. Rather than meeting the usual dust drifts inside, you'll be pleased to see that most of the debris has fallen through a grating into the easy-access dust box below. This is a super bit of low-tech common sense, and a feature much coveted by this user.

Up and running

The first thing you want to do with a new blade fitted is to get the saw running well. Once you've set the tension, it's always advisable to check the guide bearings, not only to ensure smooth running but to avoid damaging your blade and costing you money and time.

It will come as no surprise to learn that the bearings here, both above and below the table, are generous in size and eminently adjustable – there's plenty of room to get in there with your hex keys.

Grumble and praise

I had a couple of very minor gripes with this machine. The blade guard height adjustment requires a two-part lock to be negotiated, and the plastic infill strip next to the on/off switch looks a bit on the disposable side. However, neither is a real problem.

Both the fences are excellent, though. The main one can be readily adjusted to match the blade bias, and it was good to see table grooves at both sides of the blade for the supplementary sliding fence. This one is particularly useful for making repeat cuts and, together with the tilt of the table, is a good way of achieving good results on compound angle work

SPECIFICATION

MOTOR	900W
TABLE SIZE	560 x 400mm
TABLE TILT	-2° to +45°
HEIGHT UNDER GUIDES	100mm
BLADE WIDTHS	6-16mm
BLADE LENGTH	2240mm
CUTTING CAPACITY	165-305mm
CUTTING SPEED	6.7 to 13.3m/sec
FLEX LENGTH	2.6m
WEIGHT	81.2kg

VERDICT

This is a good starter machine – not the heaviest duty model in the world, but more than capable of everyday workshop service. It comes with a good selection of blades.

- PROS**
- Lots of adjustment
 - Easy blade change
 - LED worklight
 - Clever dust box

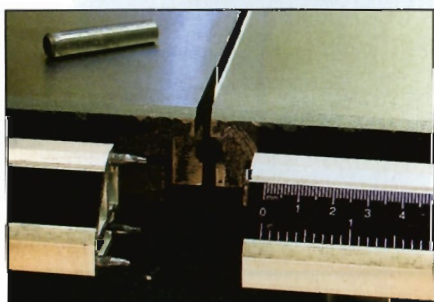
- CONS**
- Fiddly blade guard lock

VALUE FOR MONEY

PERFORMANCE

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Makita
- 01908 211678
- www.makitauk.com



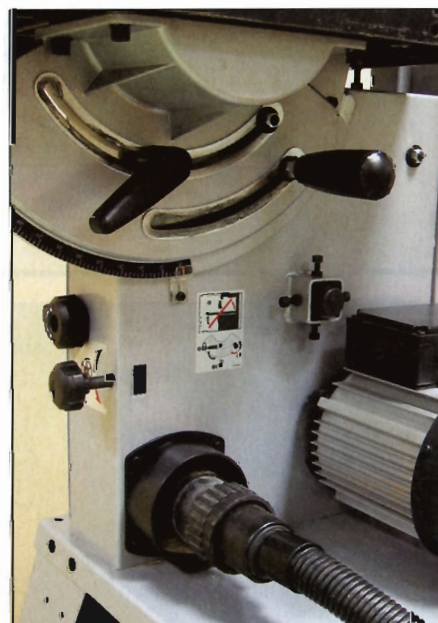
The fence rail slides open for easy blade changes



The dust box at the back of the case is pure genius!



The saw produces clean cuts on the thickest timbers



The tilt adjustment is positive. Note the extraction point